

Regional Meeting Report #4

Virginia State Preparedness Report (SPR) Project Regional Meeting, Region II James Madison University Harrisonburg, VA; Dec 4, 2007

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Purpose: The following information is presented in bullet format, by breakout group, without supporting comments and recommendations. The purpose of this report is to provide the program managers with a snapshot of the regions' current accomplishments and capabilities and the recommended targets and initiatives for the future.

The comments are presented without attribution to a particular agency or individual.

Enhance Regional Collaboration:

There is collaboration within Region II but the region is not functioning as one entity. Collaboration is ongoing in several smaller groups of jurisdictions, natural historical neighboring counties, that seems to be a solution to this wide spread region. This does, however, complicate the delivery of preparedness programs by supporting state agencies. Capabilities and Accomplishments:

- Northern Valley Emergency Preparedness Team (NVEPT). Consists of six (6) members and meets monthly.
- Madison County: Counties that border Madison County are invited but do not participate in Madison County meetings. This is a problem.
- Frederick and Winchester Counties: Have a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC).
- Local and Statewide Mutual Aide (SMA): The new SMA is an improvement.
- EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact) – sounds good but have seen no impact on the region.
- Six (6) counties have crafted a joint agreement. Have a formal MA agreement (NVEPT Mutual Aide Agreement).
- There are eighteen (18) 911 PSAP's (Public Safety Answering Point). Some jurisdictions are always left out.
- VDEM Regional Coordinators – Region collaboration occurs in the center, but not in the outskirts. Supposed to work with all jurisdictions.
- There is a VDEM Regional Coordinators Meeting that meets quarterly.
- VDEM annual briefings are held.
- VDH (Virginia Department of Health) – Hosts most of the Pandemic meetings.
- State planning meetings are held under COVEOP (Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan).

- ATAC (Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council): There is an Eastern District and a Western District. The Western District is very active. It is all about motivation.
- Info sharing is occurring, such as ATAC. You don't necessarily have to accomplish tasks to make groups successful.
- There are 3-5 operating subgroups within the region.
- Operations within the region is planning district driven.
- There are three (3) existing Planning District Commissions.
- Sub regions appear to have the same needs.
- There are five (5) full time Emergency Management Planners (?).
- Many jurisdictions don't apply for grants because the grants are too cumbersome. If you get the money, there is no full time person to supervise the project and not enough time or enough people to commit to the project.
- Small counties don't have the funding to pay for full time emergency managers but more full time emergency management types, planners and logisticians, are needed.

Targets for 2010:

- There needs to be better state and regional guidance on preparedness issues.
- Enhance communication in the larger, more rural regions. Communication in these regions is lacking.
- Sub Regions – More communications, bigger management team and more resources are needed within the region.
- The 911 Center operation needs improvement. In a major emergency, you may have to operate only with local resources. Currently, for back up, you have to pull from an adjacent county which is two (2) hours away. There is no structural depth with adjacent counties. This leaves a county or locality unmanned when the emergency personnel are dispatched to an adjacent jurisdiction.
- There is a lack of focal points in the counties due in part to the part time nature of the emergency managers.
- State level agencies aren't bringing people together to share information. Better information channels need to be developed. Is that where the full time Planner should be?
- State and Federal programs and assistance are structured better for larger jurisdictions, not for rural and smaller localities.
- Restructure the regions – Re-look "region" commonality. Re-examine functionality of regions as they are now.
- Take an inventory before you re-examine the functionality of regions.

Initiatives/Steps

- Address the lack of cohesiveness in the communications coming down from the state level.
- Consider hiring more full time emergency planners, assign them to the region.
- Identify regions and localities that don't have an emergency planner and possibly have some of the counties "share" an emergency planner.
- There needs to be "overall guidance." At some point there must be guidance given for issues and state agencies should "speak with one voice." Now the

messages are confusing and disjointed.

- Review the state's regional structure – region size and span of control for region coordinator and staffs (?).

Enhance Communication Capabilities:

Capabilities and Accomplishments

- Police and fire departments can talk.
- Everyone's units communicate with everyone – multidiscipline within the jurisdictions.
- There is communication through a dispatcher however, radio communication is the preference.
- Schools operate as a separate entity based upon budget allocation.
- Day to day operations is workable.
- Communication with citizens is achieved via Reverse 911, Stargaze, the Emergency Broadcast System, sirens, ham radios, and OnStar. Only the state police can use the STARS radio system.
- Radios exist.
- Unaffordable communication systems exist.
- There is tower space.

Targets and Initiatives:

- Enhance capability within the High Schools.
- Need for total interoperability.
- Identify who should be included in the Interoperability Plans.
- Identify which departments we work with the majority of the time.
- Need for preparation for unusual situations.
- Schools need to be included in the Interoperability Plan.
- Need to be state guidelines concerning which jurisdictions can be interoperable with each other.
- Needs to be standard versus regulatory compliance.
- FCC regulations – compliance.
- The narrowband issue needs to be addressed.
- Federal mandate/FCC – the state can use this to increase interoperability.
- Need to integrate systems.
- Need to expand communications.
- Enhance voice over IP and radio over IP.
- Need to tap into the wireless infrastructure.
- Enhance alerting and informing the public.
- Improve the system by defining operability versus interoperability.
- The California and Forest Service models need to be examined.
- Define interoperability from the state's perspective.
- Identify subsets within regions.
- Set budget/funding.
- Communication models should follow NIMS.
- Develop local, state, regional, and Federal guidelines.
- Enhance cross training.
- Need for funding a management person to control the communications side of

each jurisdiction.

- Use focus groups from colleges and universities (students who think outside of the box) to determine ways to communicate emergency situations to the public.

Enhance transferring data.

- Systems need to be open design.
- Look at new technology for solutions.
- Money must be allocated for all jurisdictions.
- Need for money for upgrading.
- Grant money allocation needs to be streamlined.
- The Grant process needs work.
- The application process timeline needs to be improved.
- Disperse monies per capital.

Enhance CBRNE Detection, Response, and Decontamination:

Accomplishments and Capabilities

- New communications systems coming on-line in a couple of counties
- In the counties without new communications systems, needs have been determined
- The relationships in many communities and within the region as a whole, have improved
- Special Operations Teams have been formed, equipped, trained and operational
- Rockingham County has created a Disaster Response Task Group: many local non-traditional response organizations involved
- Conducting assessments to determine needed plans and resources
- Exercises have successfully integrated the Incident Command System and foster relationships
- There have been new plans for responses developed and review and update of older plans
- Closely working with non-traditional response organizations
- Expanded EOC Operations in the region---New facilities and purchase of a Command Vehicle

Targets for the year 2010

- Improve communications for the region – continue to build the areas of the region that do not have good communications operability
 - New main systems
 - Repeaters in areas where signals are poor
 - Cache of portable radios for use during a disaster
 - Purchase and use of the ACU 1000 or ACU 2000
- Continue to conduct vulnerability assessments
 - Determine priorities and actions for the region
 - Determine needed resources
- Continue to include non-traditional response groups to plan for disasters and exercises
 - Continue to foster the current relationships established
- Continue to conduct exercises to:

- Foster and build relationships
 - Validate new, existing and updated plans
 - Challenge current systems to their maximum capacity
 - Identify useful resources as well as resources that could be used
- Address funding for sustainability of resources:
 - Equipment – up-grade, maintenance and replacement
 - Specialized Vehicles – Hazardous Materials, Incident Command, Disaster Support, Breathing Air, Mass Casualty, etc.
 - Chemical, Biological, and Radiological clothing
 - Personnel – replace and train personnel who have been promoted, accepted another position, or non-traditional response personnel
- Funding for jurisdictions to expand upon current monitoring and detection equipment
- Increase resources for jurisdictions to provide required training, to be coordinated regionally, for traditional and non-traditional response organizations
- Determine realistic mandates based upon current, realistic and available resources
 - Personnel can manage only a few mandates-already wearing several hats
 - Money should be attached to the mandates in order for the region to comply

Initiatives/Steps

- Determine the best type and utilization of available funds
 - In-kind matching
 - Regional/State/Federal money resources
 - Combination of resources
- Create a simple and easy process to conduct vulnerability assessments.
 - Continue and modify current system if one can not be created
 - Assessments should be validated by local coordinator
- Use the analysis from the vulnerability assessments and the lesson learned to reach out to those non-traditional community resources to support activities during a disaster
 - Businesses
 - Industry
 - Organizations
 - Local/Regional/State Government agencies
- Request and conduct more regional exercises and conduct more local/regional exercises
- Determine the best type and utilization of available funds to maintain sustainability of resources
 - Costs of sustainability should be factored into requests for grants, etc.
- Develop a better coordination method between regional and state agencies to better coordinate and conduct required courses – REGIONALLY
- Better program for mandates – State and Federally:
 - Establish more realistic deadlines for mandates
 - Mandates need to be proportional to local/regional vulnerability

- assessments
- Simple and straight forward mandates
 - Understood by all
 - Validated by the local coordinator
 - Supported by monies to accomplish within a realistic time period

Enhance Planning and COOP:

Capabilities and Accomplishments

- All jurisdictions have EOPs
- All have Mitigation Plans
- Some have established EOC's
- Several have LEPCs
- Frederick established a COOP plan
- Frederick County has built a new Public safety Bldg.
- Fauquier is an assoc. member of the Washington Metropolitan Metro COG
- WebEOC is available
- Insta-Phone is also available (five counties that surround NAPS)
- All have established MOU's
- All use EMAC system
- Sheltering Basic plans are in place however they need to be expanded to include large scale/long term incidents
- Shenandoah and Frederick County have monthly regional meetings among the entities they work with on a daily basis
- NIMS is in place and in use
- All are using plain language for communications
- All of members of the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF)

Targets for 2010

- Establish smaller more functional regions
- Secure additional funding for staffing and planning operations
- Need to develop Regional plans based on the DHS initiatives
- Provide additional funding to support smaller, more focused regional areas with respect to exercise money
- Increase funding to support ICS/NIMS at the first level of training such as recruits etc.
- Expand reverse 911 system to reach all jurisdictions in the region
- Increase resources in planning and funding to support mass sheltering for all types of emergencies
- Improve relocation plans for sheltering inmates during evacuations of facilities
- Increase planning and support for long term planning, ex. Nursing homes, Inmates, special needs, transits/evacuees.
- Increase/develop plan to inform citizens on preparedness awareness
- Develop a regional mass fatality plan

Steps/Initiatives

- Develop and prioritize an agenda to address the objectives above

- Identify funding to support staffing
- Enhance full regional collaboration
- Re-focus the state priorities so they can be applied to rural localities since the needs are different in these areas
- Develop and implement succession training and planning
- Develop a training matrix for regional exercises including a calendar, hot topics etc.
- Establish a mass fatality/casualty planning team to develop a regional plan

Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place, and Mass Care (Shelter and Feeding):

Accomplishments/Capabilities

- Region uses current revision of a 1992 evacuation study completed by FEMA and Army Corps of Engineers. The study which includes assessments in 5 areas- hazards, vulnerability, transportation, shelters, and a behavior analysis-is used to plan for sheltering needs as well as evacuation/traffic patterns.
- State sheltering plan in place to provide shelters in state owned facilities, with JMU identified as one such shelter. This provides sheltering for citizens over and above local plans.
- Winchester schools can reallocate students from one facility to another.
- Winchester Medical Center has established 3 teams to respond to the scene of a MCI, which provides an initial step in providing mass medical care.
- The Commonwealth is currently developing procedures for the establishment and operation of family assistance centers (FACs) during a disaster.
- Winchester has identified shelters and personnel to staff shelters for 2500 individuals
- Frederick County has developed relationships with WVA and their emergency managers (WVA borders 3 sides of Frederick County). WVA has been included as participants in some of the VDEM exercises.
- New public safety building with a dedicated self- sufficient EOC in Winchester.
- Region has used AARs of exercises to improve their plans
- City of Culpepper, Fauquier County, and Rappahannock County have a compatible 800 MHz radio system that can automatically transfer 911 calls to each other's PSAP (public safety access point)/9-1-1 call center.
- Red Cross has a national data base of shelters and when open, the data base is updated twice daily. This system assists localities in determining evacuation and sheltering needs.
- Red Cross has drafted a catastrophic sheltering plan for Northern VA which may alleviate evacuation congestion in Region 2.
- Evacuation routes have been identified
- Statewide workshop scheduled for March 2008 to discuss challenges/issues of special needs population
- Work has begun to plan for sheltering of pets during disasters

Targets for 2010

- Define/categorize the term *special needs*. Should term refer to individuals with special medical needs and no caregiver, or to those who do not have the resources

- to evacuate or shelter-in-place?
- Develop plans for evacuation and sheltering once Region 7 has completed their evacuation plan that incorporates the District of Columbia's *Walk out Plan*. The Walk out Plan is an emergent evacuation plan to move residents/commuters without transportation out of harms way. The plan calls for residents/commuters to leave DC through assembly/transportation pick up points and transport them into neighboring regions, including VA Region 7 which will ultimately affect Region 2's plans.
- Collaboration with federal agencies as they plan for relocation of FEMA offices in Winchester and how their presence will affect local resources during disasters.
- Develop including but not limited to sheltering and evacuation options for care givers of the special medical needs population.
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Family Assistance Centers (FACs). Need to roll out to localities when the Commonwealth completes plan
- Determine if the region can handle special needs population. No study has been completed or no accurate count or location of special needs population.
 - Develop additional community preparedness awareness/education for those with special medical needs or other special needs
 - Educate caregivers on their role during disasters; i.e. how to plan for evacuations or shelter in place, and location of critical needed resources such as generators.
- Part of region has begun residential developments for influx of baby boomers (senior living subdivisions), yet need to identify or study how this population will impact or increase needs for emergency management during disasters.

Initiatives/Steps

- Begin discussions by the end of 2008 with command and control units of federal, state, and local agencies on the impact of the federal COOP on the region
- Increase public awareness /education about regional response capabilities and where individuals can access emergency information
- Expand Northern VA Region 3 evacuation concept into Region 2
- Expand JIC plan to include neighboring states and federal agencies who's offices are located in the region

Critical Resource Logistics and Distribution:

There were no participants for this working group.